

**Alignment:**  
**Discrepancies of Practice and Vision**  
**in U.S. Army Staffing**

**A Monograph**  
**by**  
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## **Abstract**

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This study examines a fundamental misalignment in the efficiency and effectiveness of current processes employed to select and place candidates for service in tomorrow's United States Army. This misalignment concerns the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics (KSAOs) identified and measured through selection testing and employed as qualification metrics for final job assignment within the Army's enlisted recruit population. Because of paradigm shifts in the national security environment and a consequent expected increase in the type of activities predicted for tomorrow's Army, Cold War qualification metrics now require alteration to ensure the best potential for successful prosecution of the national security strategy. Through a deliberate re-engineering of key staffing stratagems and processes, the Army can better align with modern goals and the human capital needs of tomorrow's Army. This study elaborates on the principle needs for change by examining official documents which specify the recent paradigm shift in the global security environment and enumerate the consequent future force requirements. This examination highlights the misalignment between the Army's contemporary staffing strategy and the actual staffing needs of the organization, a classic example of espoused theory vs. theory-in-use. This study then prescribes a strategic solution for this misalignment, a solution that leverages available technology within existing systems to provide significant return on investment. In closing, this study will furnish a detailed map of processes targeted for re-engineering, a forecast of anticipated major obstacles, and a consolidated listing of human resource skills required for the implementation and subsequent management of the revitalized Army soldier selection and placement system.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Army's staffing needs are evolving more now than perhaps ever before. In January 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld<sup>1</sup> delivered a speech at the National Defense University in Washington D.C. in which he described his vision for transformation of the U.S. military as a move from a threat-based, Industrial Age strategy to a capability-based, Information Age strategy. Insisting on a future fraught with perilous uncertainty, where America risked catastrophe if focused too myopically on defeating only known military adversaries, he called for an military postured to defeat not who, but what. Such a military would not be drilled to exploit the vulnerabilities of the equipment and tactics of specific, known foes as done throughout the Cold War, but would be more focused on mitigating our own vulnerabilities through technological and informational advantage while maintaining superiority of lethal and non-lethal effects across a full spectrum of conflict. Consistent with the Secretary's vision, such a force would be more responsive to the national command authority, more physically and mentally adaptive, ultimately more decisive, and possibly more of a deterrent for those who might consider challenging American national interests or national security in a future global context. In April 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld further refined and emphasized his vision for transformation in his office's release of the *Transformation Planning Guidance*, wherein he reinforced the theme of a more adaptive, technologically adept, and information-dominant force by describing the future force as "...less platform-centric and more network-centric."<sup>2</sup>

To accomplish these two paradigm shifts in the Army, namely from threat-based to capability-based and from platform-centric to network-centric, new core competencies will be

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<sup>1</sup> Rumsfeld, Donald. *Remarks as prepared for delivery to the national defense university on 31 January 2002*. Retrieved August 2, 2003 from <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020131-secdef.html>, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Rumsfeld, Donald. *Transformation Planning Guidance*. Retrieved August 2, 2004 from [http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library\\_files/documents/document\\_8\\_Transformation%20Planning%20Guidance%20\(April%202003\)1.pdf](http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/documents/document_8_Transformation%20Planning%20Guidance%20(April%202003)1.pdf), 2003.

required, and the current Army staffing strategy should be re-evaluated for viability and relevancy. This paper will undertake to initiate that re-evaluation through a review of pertinent literature and a comparative analysis of current Army staffing processes with academic human resource management theory. Personal experience as a recruiting operations officer for eighteen months will supplement that analysis where necessary or germane. This paper will conclude by offering an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the basic Army staffing processes, as currently configured, to meet the Army's evolving, strategic staffing needs of transformation.

Recurring needs, such as staffing, are arguably best satisfied through the employment of a deliberate process. Heneman and Judge<sup>3</sup>, propose such a process in their staffing model. This model is comprised of three sub-processes, namely acquiring, deploying, and retaining a workforce. It is through these separate but linked sub-processes, that Heneman and Judge contend all critical staffing needs can be resolved. Despite its simplistic appearance, the Heneman and Judge staffing process model does provide a useful framework for the classification and study of the Army's evolving staffing needs, particularly for this paper's purpose.

Although they are not specifically articulated as such, one can infer from the strategic vision outlined by Secretary Rumsfeld<sup>4</sup> for the Department of Defense, three fundamental staffing needs that will be critical to the success of transformation. The first staffing need is to enlist more individuals with different abilities than in the past. The Chief of Staff of the Army reinforced this inference in a remark to the Wall Street Journal in December 2003. General Schoomaker provided an indication of his vision for the future soldier when he stated "We are very good in the Army in developing single-event people. If we were a track team, we'd have the best 100-yard dash people, the best milers, and the best discus throwers. But what we really need

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<sup>3</sup> Heneman, Herbert & Judge, Timothy. *Staffing organizations* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Middleton, WI: Mendota House, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Rumsfeld, *Remarks as prepared for delivery to the national defense university on 31 January 2002; Transformation Planning Guidance.*



to be making right now are the decathletes that are just good enough at everything.”<sup>5</sup> The Army Transformation Roadmap<sup>6</sup> further enumerates four specific traits that will be required of future Army leaders. Secretary Rumsfeld<sup>7</sup> makes it clear that transformed U.S. forces will be leaner and more dispersed, increasing the possibility of increasingly de-centralized execution of complex military operations at the lowest levels, and the future Army traits are compatible with this vision. The second staffing need is to enlist all individuals at the lowest possible cost. This is important because materiel acquisition and personnel end strength are zero-sum games once the Congress appropriates funds or sets manpower caps.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, dollars saved in accessions can be used elsewhere within the department or branch of service to purchase additional capability-enhancing technology. The Army Modernization Plan<sup>9</sup> indicates that by improving applicant-to-job match for all accessions by four percent could increase overall Army savings by \$50 million annually. And the third and final staffing need is the retention of the majority of individuals past their initial term of contracted service. This will be especially critical as the force becomes more dependent on network-centric operations that require familiarity with advanced equipment, familiarity with information-sharing techniques and pathways, experience in adaptive problem-solving, experience with inter-agency operations, as well as the standard combat skills necessary to fight and win on any battlefield. These three inferred staffing needs can be summarized as smarter, cheaper, and more dedicated.

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<sup>5</sup> Jaffe, Greg. “A Maverick’s Plan to Revamp Army is Taking Shape.” *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved December 12, 2003 from <http://ebird.afis.osd.mil/ebfiles/e200312122406662.html>, 2003, December 12.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Army. *Army Transformation Roadmap*. Retrieved February 12, 2004 from <http://www.army.mil/2003TransformationRoadmap/>, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Rumsfeld, *Remarks as prepared for delivery to the national defense university on 31 January 2002; Transformation Planning Guidance*.

<sup>8</sup> United States Army War College. *How the army runs*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Army. *Army Modernization Plan*. Retrieved February 12, 2004 from <http://www.army.mil/features/MODPlan/2003/MP03Personnelweb.pdf>, 2003, E-11.

Although these three fundamental staffing needs for transformation can be seen as and applicable to all services, the success of the future joint force will depend to a large degree on the ability of each service to first recognize and codify its new personnel needs and then integrate these needs into a common selection process. This is a critical point, and a potential obstruction to progress because services recruit separately but select jointly. In other words, if the one test used to measure aptitude among all services now needs to be adjusted to measure other traits or competencies for transformation of a service, will the test still measure those attributes needed by another service or will a separate test need to be developed and validated? This question needs an answer today. According to the systems theory principle of equifinality<sup>10</sup>, which states that closed system final states or outcomes are determined by initial conditions, unpredicted increases in Army personnel attrition due to initial selection of inappropriate soldiers will lead to undesirable outcomes or even system disintegration. More importantly, tomorrow's leaders are enlisting today, so it is imperative that services select today the soldiers with the traits needed for tomorrow. Design and validation of new qualification tests take time that risks inappropriate accessions and changes to a joint test require service cooperation at the highest levels. For that reason and others, this paper's research and analysis is important to broaden an understanding of the staffing challenges inherent in Army transformation. Failing to identify and acting upon these challenges early could lead to a significant loss of the eligible population to other recruiting services, ultimately result in a failure to meet required end strengths in the transformed Army, or possibly man our future Army with the wrong soldiers.

## **Research Question**

This research effort was driven by the fundamental question, "Are current Army staffing processes aligned with Army needs?" This overarching question was supported by the subordinate questions: 1) "Are current Army staffing processes efficient?", and 2) "Are current

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<sup>10</sup> Bertalanffy, Ludwig von. *General Systems Theory*. (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 40.

Army staffing processes effective?’’ For the purposes of the research experiment, efficient processes were considered those that were consistent with the three staffing needs of the Department of Defense (smarter, cheaper, and more dedicated), within the application parameters of human resource management staffing theory.<sup>11</sup> The evaluation criteria used to determine Army staffing process efficiency were use, reactions, validity, reliability, utility, adverse impact, and cost. The criteria of use refers to the determination as to whether or not examined processes were being used at all or being circumvented by staffing personnel. The criteria of reactions refers to the applicant’s reactions to the selection processes employed and the extent to which the processes themselves actually skew results. The criteria of validity refers to the ability of the recruiting and selection processes employed to accurately measure the desired applicant characteristics such as cognitive ability, multi-cultural understanding, or multi-functional capabilities. The criteria of reliability refers to the ability of the selection processes employed to report the same results under similar variables. The criteria of utility refers to the ability of the staff processes, irrespective of other criteria, to provide value to the recruiting or selection processes. The criteria of adverse impact refers to the ability of the staffing processes employed to mitigate unintended discrimination against specified groups of applicants. The criteria of cost refers to the ability of the examined process to keep costs low.

Lacking established scientific evaluation criteria, this experiment’s consideration of Army staffing effectiveness is more subjective but no less convincing, being based on an intuitive assessment of the Army staffing system’s congruence with Department of Defense and Army stated visions for the future force. The criteria of congruence refers to the ability of the staffing processes in place today to provide the human capital required by the Army of tomorrow.

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<sup>11</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*, 4.

## Delimitations

In order to succeed in determining the alignment of Army staffing processes with a transforming Army's needs, this study must delimit its ambitions to a manageable state. Because the preponderance of the current Army end strength consists of active duty enlisted soldiers, and this preponderance is not expected to shift to a minority in the transformed Army, this study will only examine those Army staffing processes employed to acquire and deploy active duty enlisted soldiers for the Army. The exclusion of the third sub-process of the Heneman and Judge staffing process model<sup>12</sup>, retaining the workforce, will also be a deliberate delimitation of this study. Due to the lack of authoritative, non-military literature or historical data on Army retention processes, it is suspected that any resulting conclusions would be highly speculative at best and not useful for the purposes of this study. As a final delimitation, this paper will not consider any Army staffing processes for the Army Reserve or National Guard because these processes contain some distinct differences from the staffing processes for active duty, enlisted soldiers.<sup>13</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In general there exists a sufficient quantity and quality of literature to conduct a useful analysis of the historical ability of the Army recruiting and staffing processes to meet the evolving manpower needs of the organization. In this section, the lessons of this literature are overlaid upon personal experience gained from 18 months of supervising all U.S. Army enlistments in the Caribbean Basin from 2000-2002. The current system is then analyzed using the evaluation criteria commonly used by human resource scientists appraising civilian staffing systems.

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<sup>12</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*. (Fort Knox, KY, 2002).

## Historical Predictors of Success

The literature consulted for this paper included government publications, contracted consulting firm studies, professional journal articles, human resource textbooks, official speeches, and published empirical studies of Army accession data. Such resources specifically provided refined, historical perspectives on the issues concerning the acquisition and deploying sub-processes of the Heneman and Judge<sup>14</sup> staffing process model. These perspectives revealed three predictors of success for the acquisition phase. These predictors concerned the accurate calculation of required applicant characteristics (i.e. cognitive ability, dedication, intuition etc.), the motivation and ability of the recruiter to recruit, and the motivation of the high-quality (i.e. high cognitive ability by today's standards) to enlist. Of these three factors, the first pertains to system effectiveness, while the second and third pertain to system efficiency. In the following discussion of these predictors, it is important to note the Army can directly influence the first two, but influence on the third predictor will be arguably indirect at best.

An article by Binkin<sup>15</sup> establishes an historical linkage between the amount of technology in the Army and the subsequent Army demand for personnel. By scrutinizing past technological insertions into the Army mainstream, Binkin<sup>16</sup> found that often the technology that was designed to enhance a capability and reduce the manpower required to perform a given task either had an opposite effect, or actually increased the manpower requirements in other areas, such as maintenance. Binkin<sup>17</sup> concluded that in these cases, the critical elements which could best predict the net manpower impact involved the technology's complexity, reliability, and

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<sup>14</sup>Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Binkin, M. *Military Technology and Army Manpower: Do Smart Weapons Require Smart Soldiers?* In (Ed.) Eitelberg, M., and Mehay, S., *Marching Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Military Manpower and Recruiting*. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994) 169-184.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

maintainability. Citing the examples of the Black Hawk and Apache helicopters, which required up to six times the predicted maintenance personnel to successfully field the aircraft after the Army purchased them, Binkin<sup>18</sup> also offered the possibility that such manpower underestimations were deliberate on the part of acquisition and engineering personnel in order to portray lower life cycle costs and thus stimulate eventual purchase. If true, technology's manpower costs may also be unintentionally driven up by modern acquisition and contracting practices within the Department of Defense. But Binkin<sup>19</sup> also presented the other side of technology as well, the more familiar outcome of increased performance and reduced manpower. The M1 Abrams tank was one of the examples he used to demonstrate the success of technology in the Army. A far superior tank to the M60 tank that it replaced, the M1 tank is actually easier to operate effectively than the M60, despite the M1's extremely complex electronics, armament and optics. In this specific case, the complexity of the technology, one of Binkin's<sup>20</sup> critical determinants for the impact on manpower of any technology, was deemed to be transparent to the operator and therefore enabled huge advances in capability without commensurate burdens on manpower. Ideally, Binkin<sup>21</sup> argues that all technological insertions in the Army should be designed to be transparent to operators, but unfortunately his research illustrates a historical tendency within the Army to overlook this necessity.

Binkin<sup>22</sup> concludes by stressing that any technological insertions in to the Army mainstream should be fully and faithfully assessed in terms of the criterion of complexity, reliability, and maintainability, in order to ensure predictable impacts on manpower requirements after purchase and fielding. He acknowledges the establishment of the MANPRINT program to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

enable input from the lowest levels during the design process as a way to mitigate the dangers presented by his three criterion, but does not suggest possessing an abundant confidence in the ability of this program to substitute for a programmed, focused evaluation.

Therefore, the literature available on the high quality applicant demand predictor relevant to the acquisition phase of the Heneman and Judge<sup>23</sup> staffing process model is of mixed value to this study. Binkin's<sup>24</sup> research shows that technology insertion in the Army has reduced manpower demands if inserted judiciously, but that improper screening of technology has led to some unintended manpower increases elsewhere in the system due to unanticipated connectivity within the system, or reliability and maintainability issues with the technology. He also contends that transparent complexity that is engineered within an inserted technology has not only alleviated overall strength numbers, but also cognitive ability requirements. In other words, Binkin<sup>25</sup> concludes that increased cognitive ability is not necessarily required if technology is engineered with transparent complexity. This conclusion directly contradicts current Army recruiter incentive programs, which generally reward recruiters for enlisting applicants with high cognitive ability test scores.

A Rand study by Asch and Orvis<sup>26</sup> and a General Accounting Office<sup>27</sup> report provide historical insight into Army actions to increase recruiter motivation. Both publications begin by acknowledging significant failures in the military staffing process as attributable to low recruiter motivation, and further attribute this low motivation to inconsistencies in military recruiter

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<sup>23</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Binkin, *Military Technology and Army Manpower: Do Smart Weapons Require Smart Soldiers?*

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Asch, Beth, and Orvis, Bruce. *Military Recruiting: Trends, Outlook, and Implications*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Publishing, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*. (Gaithersburg, MD: General Accounting Office, 1994).

incentive programs. Therefore this paper can, with some degree of certainty, assert the maintenance of viable, inspiring, and cost-effective recruiter incentive programs will be instrumental in the success of any future transformational staffing process.

The third key factor of the acquisition phase, the historical inclination of individuals of higher cognitive capability to enlist in the Army, is discussed in a professional journal article by Hauk and Parlier<sup>28</sup>. The article authors point out the historical incentives the Army has used in the past to attract its target population of seventeen to twenty-one year old high school graduates, namely economic incentives such as up to \$60,000 for college. The article also indicates how the Army typically supplements such incentives with additional cash bonuses upon enlistment into its high demand occupations in the combat arms field, such as infantry, armor and artillery. Warning that these types of external rewards for service only appeal to those who need the money the most, hence not necessarily those with the highest education level or cognitive ability, the authors suggest the existence of a fundamental flaw within the whole enlistment incentive system. In order to achieve a transformational goal of acquiring more individuals with higher cognitive abilities, it is imperative to be sensitive to the possible existence of this flaw and how it does affect the efficiency of current staffing processes. Hauk and Parlier<sup>29</sup> offer insight into this dilemma by illustrating why this particular group has not enlisted by droves in the past.

Writing the article during a time of relative economic prosperity, Hauk and Parlier<sup>30</sup> attribute the future and past difficulties in Army manpower acquisition to the number of other viable environmental options available to its target population. Jobs as well as now ubiquitous state and local college scholarships are blamed for diverting the high-school graduates from military careers into the civilian mainstream. Within the contemporary environment, these

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<sup>28</sup> Hauk, Keith. & Parlier, Greg. "Recruiting: Crisis and Cures." *Military Review* (May-June 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



abundant options erode the original target population for enlistment to an assembly of only those graduates without, sufficient income, adequate grades for scholarships, or other skills useful in the job market. It is these economically challenged individuals who then, according to Hauk and Parlier<sup>31</sup>, are most inclined to turn to the military option, and the ramifications of this environmental phenomenon are startling. Hauk and Parlier<sup>32</sup> propose their research shows that only those graduates with the fewest alternatives are inclined to enlist in the Army. And of that pool of potential enlistees, it is those who are most economically disadvantaged that choose to enlist for combat arms jobs because those branches offer the largest cash incentives for minimal qualifications. Hauk and Parlier<sup>33</sup> caution this confluence of environmental and systemic factors could create a sense of economic conscription in the nation, where the most disadvantaged are burdened with the task of defending the prerogatives and alternatives of the most advantaged.

To rectify the contemporary environmental challenges of Army manpower acquisition, Hauk and Parlier<sup>34</sup> indicate the Army could offer 401k funds, or decrease initial term pay but reduce the length of the initial term of service. As a final counter to the abundant opportunity in the contemporary environmental context the Army could alter its retirement program to allow initial entry soldiers access to their retirement contributions until commitment to a second term of service at which point they would become vested in the program. While these suggestions do create enlistment incentives that are arguably more competitive within the environment of modern options for the target population, and these suggestions may serve to attract individuals of higher cognitive capacity who otherwise would have avoided military service, Hauk and Parlier<sup>35</sup> recognize these incentives are just more of the same. These incentives are external rewards and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

do not address the fundamental absence of internal rewards for that portion of the target population who possess the higher cognitive capacities and are interested in pursuing an Army occupation. Hauk and Parlier's<sup>36</sup> propose the creation and nurturing, at the highest federal levels, of a civic virtue of service among the citizenry of the nation. Future high school graduates, across the spectrum of cognitive capacity, who have inculcated this virtue may be arguably more inclined to enlist in the Army because the rewards will be both external and internal.

Therefore, Hauk and Parlier<sup>37</sup> show the current Army staffing process tends to succeed in enlisting only the more disadvantaged of the target population, and not necessarily the percentage of individuals with highest cognitive potential or other competencies. Attributing this tendency to the plethora of environmental options, this causal relationship is presented without empirical evidence, but is argued based upon objective appraisal of the current rewards system of the staffing process. This lack of empirical evidence does not completely negate the value of the conclusion, but does dilute its utility to the level of postulate or plausible conjecture. Nonetheless, the Hauk and Parlier<sup>38</sup> characterization of the rewards system inherent in the Army staffing process is unchallenged by Army regulation<sup>39</sup> and highlights a critical weakness of this rewards system, namely a lack of internal rewards for enlistment. Any adjustments to the staffing process made to achieve the goals of transformation should include deliberate increases in internal rewards during the acquisition and deploying phases of the staffing model.

To summarize the literature concerning the Army success predictors during the acquisition phase of staffing process model proposed by Heneman and Judge<sup>40</sup>, the first predictor

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Department of the Army. *Army Regulation 601-270: Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999); *REQUEST Manager's Handbook*. Pamphlet 601-5-14. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*, 4.

will be the ability of the Army to correctly identify the demand for individuals of higher cognitive capacities. Secretary Rumsfeld<sup>41</sup> and the Army's Transformation Roadmap<sup>42</sup> imply that an increase in such individuals is required for the success of transformation, but simultaneously indicate that technology will increase Army efficiency. Current U.S. Army Recruiting Command recruiter incentive programs confirm the implied preference for applicants with high cognitive abilities.<sup>43</sup> These preferences contradict Binkin's<sup>44</sup> research that shows how technology can alleviate demand for cognitive skills rather than increasing it. This dissonance between what is believe to be necessary characteristics and what research reports are required characteristics is symptomatic of ineffective human resource systems and will be addressed further in the analysis of Army staffing effectiveness later in this monograph.

The second predictor of transformation staffing success concerns the level of recruiter motivation to achieve manpower acquisition goals. Asch and Orvis<sup>45</sup> and the General Accounting Office<sup>46</sup> compliment each other's findings by concluding that careful attention to the structure and content of recruiter incentive programs is sufficient to secure recruiter motivation.

And the third predictor of transformation staffing success will be an ability to increase the appeal of an Army career to that percentage of the target population who possess the highest cognitive

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<sup>41</sup> Rumsfeld, *Remarks as prepared for delivery to the national defense university on 31 January 2002*; Transformation Planning Guidance.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Army. *Army Transformation Roadmap*.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Army Recruiting Command. *United States Army GED Plus Program*. Message 03-114. Retrieved February 26, 2004 from <http://learn.usarec.army.mil.rc/messages/bin/2003/03-114.htm>, 2003; *Implementation Plan for the United States Army 15 Month Plus Training Enlistment Option in Support of National Service*. Message 04-040. Retrieved February 21, 2004 from <http://learn.usarec.army.mil.rc/messages/bin/2004/04-040.htm>, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Binkin, *Military Technology and Army Manpower: Do Smart Weapons Require Smart Soldiers?*

<sup>45</sup> Asch and Orvis, *Military Recruiting: Trends, Outlook, and Implications*.

<sup>46</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*.

potential. Hauk and Parlier<sup>47</sup> suggest this ability will only be realized through an increase in internal rewards during the acquisition and deploying phases of the staffing process.

Just as with the acquisition phase of the staffing model, the deploying phase of the staffing process for a transforming Army will also present unique challenges and new predictors of success. The previously stated staffing need to select new recruits more frugally will give rise to two specific predictors of success for the deploying phase. The first of these predictors will be the ability of the current testing and scoring suite to adequately identify and categorize applicants that possess above average cognitive abilities and other competencies as articulated in the Army Transformation Roadmap.<sup>48</sup> The second of these predictors will entail ensuring adequate motivation for the Army guidance counselors, the Army officials who test, secure, and finally contract applicants for service. There must be adequate motivation for these counselors to fill key critical occupations in a transformed, leaner, more multi-skilled force instead of resorting to strategies that involve increased monetary enlistment incentives for certain jobs or temporarily lowering test scores in order to fill these vacancies. Clearly the former strategy, which has been used in the past<sup>49</sup>, will be unacceptable in the transformed Army where technology and human interaction is the catalyst for success and discretionary budgets must be husbanded closely in order to use any surplus to purchase increasingly expensive technology. And the latter option for filling critical vacancies in a transformed Army, an option which has also been employed in the past<sup>50</sup>, will clearly be unacceptable in a force where higher cognitive ability and other competencies will be a primary requirement which cannot be ignored without severe consequences. It is also important to note that both the former and latter strategies fail to

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<sup>47</sup> Hauk and Parlier, "Recruiting: Crisis and Cures."

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Army. *Army Transformation Roadmap*.

<sup>49</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*.

<sup>50</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*; Hauk and Parlier, "Recruiting: Crisis and Cures."

accomplish the primary purpose of any staffing selection system, namely the best person-to-job match.<sup>51</sup> The documents available which best captured the historical characteristics of these predictors were the same General Accounting Office report described earlier, as well as a Rand study by Asch and Karoly.<sup>52</sup>

The General Accounting Office<sup>53</sup> empirically showed the Army's manpower acquisition and deploying processes to be the most expensive of all the military services from an average \$5500 dollars per accession in 1989 to a predicted cost of \$7000 per accession in 1995. In general, the General Accounting Office attributed recruiting cost overruns across all services during the time period covered to burgeoning organizational recruiting staffs, an inability to control training base attrition after selection, and poor geographic dispersal of recruiting offices. These components of overall costs will have to be policed carefully in any staffing process expected to succeed in meeting the challenges of transformation of the Army. Asch and Karoly<sup>54</sup> found similar waste, but attributed the majority of these unnecessary costs to the computerized final selection system and guidance counselor motivation.

Asch and Karoly<sup>55</sup> provide empirical data that demonstrates a convincing correlation between the incentives offered guidance counselors and their capacity to contract soldiers for hard-to-fill positions. The study also found the recruit Quota System (REQUEST), the computerized selection system which ranks the applicant's mental and physical test results and matches these results to available vacancies in the Army, performs its role adequately, but allows for guidance counselors to circumvent the system's ulterior intentions. REQUEST was designed

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<sup>51</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*.

<sup>52</sup> Asch, Beth and Karoly, L. *The Role of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Publishing, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Asch and Karoly, *The Role Of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

to not only determine and identify which available positions for which any applicant's test scores are qualified, but also to present these positions in rank order on a series of screens, according to the most critical needs of the Army, and optimized for the training vacancy closest in time to the applicant's date of availability for basic training. With such a system, it was perceived logical to assume that guidance counselors would offer the most critical occupations to the applicant first, and close the deal by eventually contracting a hard-to-fill position. However, Asch and Karoly<sup>56</sup> found that without an incentive program to do so, and the threat of potentially harmful administrative action for every applicant who was Qualified but Not Enlisted (QNE), guidance counselors tended to offer the easier clerical-type positions not available on the first few screens, or the other positions which offered the most monetary incentive, in order to secure a quick applicant commitment and avoid the danger of being responsible for a QNE statistic. Asch and Karoly<sup>57</sup> concluded that individual incentive programs for guidance counselors, similar to the recruiter incentive programs, were necessary to increase guidance counselor motivation to contract applicants into the critical Army positions and mitigate the negative impact of any QNE outcomes.

To further summarize the historical success predictors during the deploying phase of the Heneman and Judge<sup>58</sup> staffing process model, the first predictor will be the ability of the Army to effectively control staffing process costs by monitoring the areas most susceptible in the past to insidious overruns, as identified by the General Accounting Office.<sup>59</sup> The second predictor of success will be the level of motivation among the Army guidance counselors to contract the best or most appropriate applicants into the hard-to-fill positions, traditionally associated with combat

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*.

<sup>59</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*.

arms occupations. The empirical study conducted by Asch and Karoly<sup>60</sup> shows that an effective incentive program for guidance counselors should dramatically increase guidance counselor performance in this area.

Before continuing to more detailed analysis, a discussion of the role of the Army guidance counselor as well as a brief explanation of the current Army staffing apparatus will be instrumental in the appreciation of the Army staffing process because guidance counselor roles and the apparatus in general do differ significantly from more traditional civilian practices. A rudimentary understanding of the relationships and roles of the applicant, Army recruiter, and Army guidance counselor will be useful to fully understand the subsequent analysis and conclusions of this paper.

The Army recruiter is generally responsible for the acquisition phase of the staffing process model proposed by Heneman and Judge.<sup>61</sup> The recruiter identifies potential applicants in the target population, pre-screens willing applicants for moral, physical, and cognitive suitability for Army service, and delivers those that successfully negotiate these pre-screening tests to the Army guidance counselors at Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) across the nation.

At the MEPS, applicants are received by the Army guidance counselor and subsequently turned over to MEPS personnel for final, objective medical and cognitive testing of the applicant. MEPS personnel oversee all services acquisition processes as an impartial testing and contracting authority. If the applicant remains qualified for Army service after the MEPS-officiated testing battery, the applicant is returned to the Army guidance counselor who then identifies possible Army occupations for which the applicant is qualified. If a desired job requires additional special testing to determine further qualification, that testing is also conducted by MEPS personnel and the results forwarded to the guidance counselor. Once an applicant is satisfied with the guidance

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<sup>60</sup>Asch and Karoly, *The Role of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*.

<sup>61</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*, 4.

counselor's job offer, the guidance counselor drafts the official enlistment contract, and the MEPS approves the contract and swears in the new recruit.

Because recruiter pre-screen and MEPS testing results can vary wildly between one another, and MEPS test scores are the only scores authorized to determine Army applicant qualifications, recruiters are not permitted to offer specific occupations to applicants. That function is reserved solely for the Army guidance counselor. Therefore, the role of the Army recruiter is best characterized as flushing out or germinating interest in the Army in general, and not any specific job in the Army. The role of the guidance counselor is to negotiate with the applicant and finalize the contract with qualified applicants, hopefully in the best interests of the Army, but usually in the best interests of the applicant in order to avoid the guidance counselor explanations which must follow any QNE.

## **EFFICACY OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM**

Despite the divergent proclivities of the apparatus, which consists of applicants, recruiters, guidance counselors, and unaffiliated testers, the current Army staffing process appears relatively consistent with the Heneman and Judge<sup>62</sup> staffing process model. But when analyzed using the standard evaluative criteria of use, reactions, validity, reliability, utility, adverse impact, and cost, the efficiency of the acquisition and deploying processes in use by the Army today could be considered inadequate. After identifying these flaws, this paper will identify which of these flaws will require repair to ensure success of future Army staffing processes to meet the challenges of Secretary Rumsfeld's vision of transformation.<sup>63</sup> For the purposes of this discussion, it may be helpful to correspond acquisition with Army recruiting, and deployment with Army selection testing and job placement.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Rumsfeld, *Remarks as prepared for delivery to the national defense university on 31 January 2002; Transformation Planning Guidance.*



In the exclusively external staffing selection system, Army recruiters are responsible for the initial assessment battery which involves a weight measurement, English comprehension determination, a cognitive ability assessment, checks with local law enforcement agencies for any history of criminal activity, and an initial interview to determine level of interest in the Army and any known health problems which may disqualify the applicant. Because this battery serves as the initial screening mechanism for a target population of applicants, its efficacy can be expected to have dramatic effects on the efficacy of the staffing process overall. It is during this initial battery of pre-tests that recruiters identify those that can pass the MEPS testing regimen from those that probably cannot. Personal experience with the results of this initial assessment battery, while supervising all U.S. Army enlistments in the Caribbean Basin from 2000-2002, is that this battery has mixed results across the spectrum of evaluative criteria of use, reactions, validity, reliability, utility, adverse impact, and cost.

Eighteen months of observing applicants who reportedly passed the recruiter's battery with maximum scores but later failed the MEPS-administered cognitive ability, English, and medical tests, is not only a disheartening experience, but one that calls into question the use of the recruiter test itself. After personally interviewing some of these applicants after their MEPS failures, it was often learned the recruiter had failed to administer the cognitive ability or medical pre-screen assessments properly or at all. Therefore, the criteria of use is assessed as moderate at best.

In still other cases, all tests were administered, administered properly, and the applicant still failed key selection tests. Often in these cases, my subsequent interview of the applicant determined that he or she had forgotten or lied during the personal interviews with the recruiter when given the opportunity to outline his or her health problems or previous criminal law violations. In such cases, the criteria of applicant reaction is clearly low to the point of interfering with the process itself. Applicant reaction can be considered an obstruction to the process because the process requires the applicant to volunteer, to a complete stranger, personal or

embarrassing data related to preexisting health conditions or law violations. Understandably, most applicants with such data to divulge rarely divulged it to a recruiter he or she had just met. The criteria of validity, reliability and utility of the cognitive pre-test administered by the recruiter should be adjudicated as moderate at best, based on eighteen months of observation. While it was not the norm for those who achieved superlative scores on this pre-test to then fail the MEPS cognitive ability test, it still did occasionally occur. Additionally, those applicants whose achieved barely passing scores on the recruiter pre-test, almost invariably failed the MEPS-administered cognitive ability test.

These false positives witnessed in the recruiter pre-test for cognitive ability consequently call into question the adverse impact of this pre-test. Because there are false positives, it is reasonable to presume there could be false negatives as well. But these false negatives would never get a chance to pass a MEPS test and secure employment because as a pre-test failure, the recruiter would not take the time to bring the applicant to the MEPS. Applicants that are false negatives are in this manner denied an equal opportunity for enlistment. due to validity and reliability shortcomings of the pre-test. Clearly this result creates a condition of adverse impact concerning the pre-test battery employed by recruiters. This probability of false negatives and the proven existence of occasional false positives, leads to the assessment of low adverse impact for the recruiter's cognitive ability pre-test. As a reminder, this evaluative criteria is scaled to measure the ability of the examined process to mitigate adverse impact, therefore a low score is far from the optimum performance.

Overall, the only evaluative criteria justified in receiving favorable marks is cost. The entire recruiter's battery is extremely cost effective in both time and money. So in effect, the recruiters are providing valuable cost savings to the Army by performing cheap staffing procedures; however, such a conclusion ignores the possibility these cost savings may be disguising intrinsic inefficiencies of the system that may threaten its overall viability if applicant qualifying criteria or other testing procedures become required to enlist a different sort of soldier

for a transforming Army. This in fact will be a focus of the subsequent portion of this study, which examines the effectiveness of current staffing procedures and their alignment with the stated transformation visions of the Department of Defense and the Army.

In summary, the effectiveness of the recruiter's pre-test battery in identifying applicants capable of achieving qualifying scores during official MEPS testing is barely moderate. Because recruiters perform the lion's share of the acquisition tasks in the Army staffing process, and the recruiter's pre-test is their only tool for assessing applicant qualifications prior to record testing, a barely moderate efficiency assessment of this process is disappointing. This assessment has shown that not only is recruiter use of the pre-test haphazard, but when it is employed the pre-test can be unreliable or invalid. Additionally the structure of the pre-test battery itself skews results by creating unnecessary applicant resistance and by creating adverse impact on the false negative applicants who fail the pre-test but could have passed the MEPS record testing. Therefore the acquisition phase of the Army staffing process should be re-engineered to ensure the quantity of soldiers the Army requires can be enlisted with the less effort and cost. Although the evaluation of acquisition system costs revealed favorable characteristics, how much more savings would be realized if the current process were efficient enough to identify only those candidates that could pass the MEPS test regimen and subsequently actually enlist for the jobs offered? Such a system would optimize recruiter and guidance counselor time, permitting further manpower reductions.

Because the final selection process is computerized, the deploying phase of the Army's current staffing process is largely outside of guidance counselor control. This renders extremely difficult any qualitative evaluation of the process using the evaluation criteria employed to assess the acquisition side of the Army staffing process. But what data is available indicates that REQUEST algorithms are optimized for training vacancies<sup>64</sup>, not applicant job match. This means that jobs offered to a candidate depend more upon the candidate's availability date than

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<sup>64</sup> Asch and Karoly, *The Role of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*.

they do the candidate's actual potential for service in the Army.<sup>65</sup> This is a critical flaw in the deployment, or selection, process. This flaw could dramatically affect Army effectiveness in the future by not only accessing inappropriate candidates into jobs which transformation will make more and more critical due to increased interdependence, but by accessing candidates into jobs that do not provide internal rewards sufficient to maintain retention at favorable levels. As one recalls, Secretary Rumsfeld highlighted retention as the third of three principal manning requirements for the transformed armed services, in order to reduce training costs and disruptive turnover.<sup>66</sup> So as a predictor of applicant potential or utility to the Army, the REQUEST system should be assessed as having low validity, reliability and applicant reactions. These low ratings will become particularly important in a transforming force. Currently guidance counselors receive a QNE statistic if a qualified applicant leaves the MEPS to return the next day and see what is then available. If the applicant and the guidance counselor are confident the applicant would make an excellent satellite repairman, is qualified to be a satellite repairman, but the only opportunity offered by the computer that day is for the job of cook assistant, the Army should allow that applicant to return another day for a better opportunity. Until guidance counselors are not penalized for letting applicants go without a contract, the counselors will continue to contract stellar applicants in less-than-challenging positions. Both the Army and the applicant will lose under these circumstances in a transformed Army.

## **Conclusions Concerning System Efficiency**

After determination of the three fundamental staffing needs of the transforming military, an examination of the literature identifying the historical predictors of success for achieving these

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<sup>65</sup> Diaz et al. *Development of a Personal Computer-Based Enlisted Personnel Allocation System. Study Report 2001-I*, (Washington, DC: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2001).

<sup>66</sup> Rumsfeld, *Remarks as prepared for delivery to the national defense university on 31 January 2002; Transformation Planning Guidance*.

future staffing needs, and an experiential and subjective analysis of the flaws of the current Army manpower acquisition and deploying systems, this paper can conclude the contemporary Army staffing system must undergo some adjustments in order to meet the challenges of future transformation.

Whether or not the increased need for individuals of higher cognitive capacity will be significant will depend upon the transparent complexity of adopted technologies of the Army's Objective Force, but it is certain that any increased needs must be accurately predicted and programmed to ensure responsive recruiting. Recruiter motivation must be maintained through incentive programs and internal reward systems for enlistment must be developed to attract more individuals of higher cognitive capabilities. Enabling qualified applicants the ability to revisit Army opportunity listings on a daily or weekly basis to secure the more skilled or challenging jobs will also help ensure those applicants with higher cognitive capabilities are not wasted in less demanding Army occupations. These adjustments will help satisfy the first need of future Army staffing, supplying the types of soldiers the Army needs.

By carefully monitoring cost overruns in the areas previously identified by the General Accounting Office<sup>67</sup>, and compelling Army guidance counselors to contract the hard-to-fill positions as often as practical, possibly through an incentive program, the Army staffing process could meet the second need of future Army staffing, namely keeping costs down. Furthermore, modifications to REQUEST to better account for candidate skills instead availability, as well as modification to the recruiter assessment battery to make it more reliable, valid, and able to better mitigate adverse impact, may be worth any additional investment cost.

These suggestions should serve as a practical starting point for re-engineering acquisition efficiency, but system efficiency is not all that is troubled in the Army staffing system. Of more critical importance than re-engineering existing mechanics of recruiting and selecting, the

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<sup>67</sup> General Accounting Office. *Military Recruiting: More Innovative Approaches Needed*.

shortfalls of the current system's effectiveness require immediate attention. The Department of Defense and the Army must coalesce around a common vision concerning soldier knowledge, skills, attributes, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that not only meets the needs of the transformed Army and its missions, but compliments the other services' human capital in such a way that joint selection processes do not have to be abandoned. This effectiveness gap in the current Army staffing process is the focus of the subsequent section.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM**

### **More Theory of Staff Planning**

There is an unsettling misalignment between the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics (KSAOs) espoused by the Department of Defense as critical for the success of tomorrow's soldier, and those KSAOs employed to match Army applicants to specific Army occupations today. Whatever the underlying reason for this misalignment may be, it is clear it should be addressed before tomorrow arrives. As an organization type which only promotes from within, today's accessions will be the Army leaders of tomorrow, possibly within the relative blink of an eye. The inherently closed nature of the enlisted promotion system type (i.e., an internal recruitment system) cannot tolerate haphazard or inappropriate accessions today and expect to remain effective or even viable for long. Bertalanffy's intuitive principle of equifinality is quite clear in this regard.<sup>68</sup> For this reason, it is imperative that staffing the preponderance of the Army force, the enlisted personnel, must be prosecuted today under the requirements of tomorrow. In other words, if transformation within the Department of Defense is to be as deep and broad as suggested by senior leaders<sup>69</sup> then staffing strategies should be modified

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<sup>68</sup> Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory*, 40.

<sup>69</sup> Department of Defense. *Joint Vision 2020*. Retrieved October 15, 2003, from <http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library.cfm?libcol=6>, 2000; *Joint Operations Concept –Final JROC Draft*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003); Department of Defense Office of Force Transformation. *Military Transformation: a Strategic Approach*. Retrieved November 23, 2003, from <http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library.cfm?libcol=6>, 2003; Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*.

concurrently. Fortunately, contemporary Human Resource science offers empirically tested, theoretical models for staffing, to ensure that recruiting, selection, and placement are congruent with organizational needs. It is helpful to understand fundamental principles of staffing theory and process before further framing the Army's current staffing misalignment issue and proposing this study's solution.

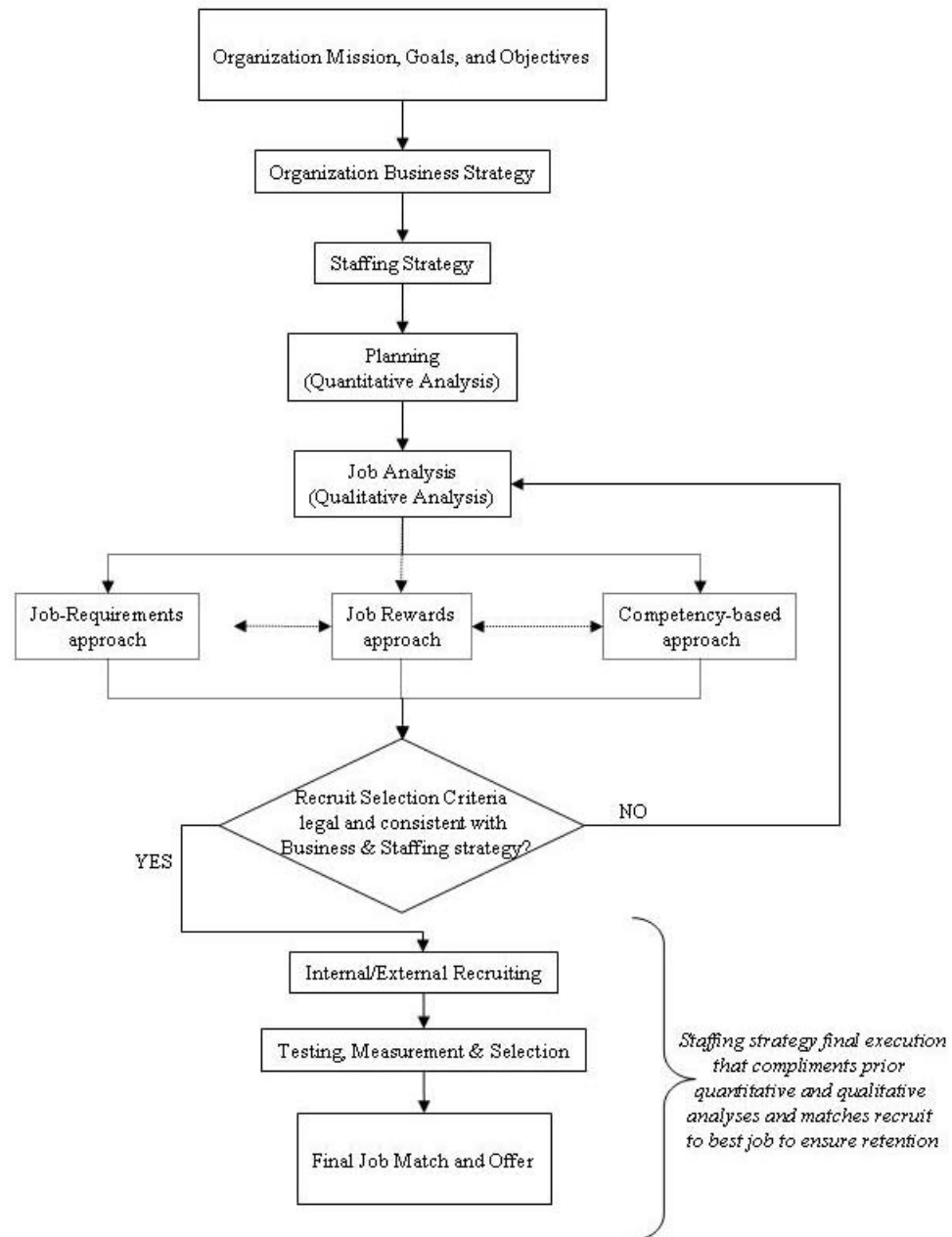
Heneman and Judge<sup>70</sup> concede that all organizations are inherently different, but assert that staffing all organizations effectively requires adherence to a common, proven theoretical process. In its most distilled form, this process begins with a quantitative needs analysis, then moves to a qualitative needs analysis, and concludes with the execution of a strategy that meets the quantitative and qualitative staffing needs of the organization while also securing recruit satisfaction to ensure retention. This process is mapped in slightly more detail in [figure 1](#). The misalignment of the Army staffing process is primarily an emergent result of its qualitative analysis and the subsequent execution of a recruiting, selection and placement strategy based upon incomplete qualitative analysis results.

Heneman and Judge<sup>71</sup> indicate and describe three distinct approaches to qualitative staff planning analysis, namely the job requirements analysis, the competency-based job analysis, and the job rewards analysis. The job-requirements analysis results in a consolidated listing of KSAOs necessary for performing to standard the key tasks of a specific job. Competency-based job analysis results in a consolidated listing of employee qualities that either represent job-spanning KSAOs (i.e., necessary for performance success on multiple jobs), or can be linked to both job performance and overall organizational success (e.g., adaptability or innovation). Job rewards analysis focuses on the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of a specific job, resulting in a list of these rewards from which a recruiting and selection strategy can be based. Understanding the

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<sup>70</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 1.**

three job analysis approaches above permits a rudimentary objective inference concerning their innate propensities in subsequent staffing strategy application, and broad implications concerning their employment.



Staffing strategies that employ strictly job rewards analysis results will have the propensity to deliver employees most likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Staffing strategies that employ strictly competency-based job analysis results will have the propensity to deliver employees that can best contribute to a dynamic organization which requires interoperability from its employees or whose success is dependent upon interconnectivity of scarce resource to make the organization more than just the sum of its parts. And staffing strategies that employ strictly job requirements analysis results will have the propensity to deliver employees that are extremely proficient at performing the critical requirements of their specific job. Through this rudimentary characterization, the underlying misalignment of the Army's contemporary staffing strategy is revealed. The Army continues to select recruits based on a job-requirements analysis despite the Department of Defense's explicit articulation of a need for the force to become more competency-based.<sup>72</sup> This process contradicts and defies the contemporary security environment and its extrapolated future, which senior defense officials intimate will require an Army based upon more job-spanning KSAOs, (i.e., competencies), while retaining basic soldier proficiencies in critical job tasks.

## Origins Of Misalignment

Within the global security paradigm of the Cold War, the fundamental assumption underlying Army plans and programs was based upon conflict with a Soviet or Soviet trained and equipped surrogate force. This assumption, commonly referred to as a threat-based model,

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<sup>72</sup> Asch and Karoly, *The Role Of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*; Campbell, John and Zook, Lola. *Building and Retaining the Career Force: New Procedures for Accessing and Assigning Army Enlisted Personnel—Final Report*. (Washington, DC: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1996); Department of Defense Office of Force Transformation, *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*; Greenston, Peter. "Development of New Army Aptitude Composites for Classification." Army Research Institute Newsletter, 11, (Summer, 2001), 17-19; Heffner, Tonia. "Maximizing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Noncommissioned Officer Performance (NCO21)." Army Research Institute Newsletter, 13, (2003, May), 1-6; Zook, Lola. *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*. (Washington, DC: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1996).

enabled and enhanced planning and development across the functions of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) and resulted in the establishment of measures of success with linkage to the specified Soviet threat. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this fundamental assumption of military planning, and all its trappings, likewise lost relevance.<sup>73</sup>

Military analysts and leaders have since argued that force planning and programs now require more focus on overall force capabilities than on countering a specific threat. The shift can be characterized as moving from who (i.e., who is the adversary?) to what (i.e., what capabilities must the force be capable of defeating?). Because there no longer exists a single peer competitor with an established DOTMLPF, the nation's military must now be prepared to decisively counter an abundance of orthodox and unorthodox potential adversaries with varying ends, ways, and means at their disposal. In order to transition to a capabilities-based force, the Department of Defense has indicated the need for many changes across the spectrum of DOTMLPF.<sup>74</sup> Most prolific within the published professional guidance concerning this transformation are the assertions that champion predominantly materiel, training, or doctrinal changes as the most direct paths toward achieving the capabilities-based paradigm<sup>75</sup>, while champions of transformation of personnel processes and paradigms have been disturbingly silent to date. This study does not dispute that changes in materiel, training, and doctrine may enhance the transition to a capabilities-based force, but this study does contend that such a transition will not occur without commensurate modifications within the area of personnel, specifically the criteria and processes

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<sup>73</sup> Department of Defense. *Joint Vision 2020; Joint Operations Concept –Final JROC Draft*; Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020; Joint Operations Concept –Final JROC Draft*; Department of the Air Force. *Air Force Transformation Roadmap*. Retrieved October 15, 2003, from <http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library.cfm?libcol=6>, (FY03-07); Department of the Navy. *Naval Transformation Roadmap*. Retrieved October 15, 2003, from <http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library.cfm?libcol=6>, (n.d.); Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*; U.S. Army. *Army Transformation Roadmap*.

employed to select and assign occupations to human capital. The lack of professional dialogue concerning strategic personnel transformation is even more perplexing overlaid on the fact the Department of Defense has already identified competencies for the future force.

The seminal force transformation document, *Joint Vision 2020*<sup>76</sup> notes that “Their [service members’] quality will matter as never before as our Service members confront a diversity of missions and technological demands that call for adaptability, innovation, precise judgment, forward thinking, and multicultural understanding.” The Transformation Planning Guidance issued by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld<sup>77</sup> does not repeat a need for the personnel qualities articulated in the *Joint Vision 2020* document, but instead it reinforces the overarching objective of transitioning to a capabilities-based force which de facto requires human capital with the flexibility, adaptability, and the multi-cultural understanding to consistently meets the demands of the dynamic global security environment. Subsequent departmental executive guidance concerning transformation represents the first mention of any intention to adjust the current staffing strategies to accommodate the context of the future by directing that “Military personnel must be recruited and trained in accordance with their ability to operate in a constantly changing environment.”<sup>78</sup> Regrettably, no more attention is given to transforming staffing strategies within the document. Thus we have a situation wherein the seminal planning document, *Joint Vision 2020*<sup>79</sup> identifies a future need for soldiers to possess the competencies of adaptability, innovation, precise judgment, forward thinking, and multicultural understanding, but subsequent executive guidance does not direct further detailed effort or attention to this need. The first Army publication that addresses the possibility of a shift in KSAOs for its personnel is

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<sup>76</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020*, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*.

<sup>78</sup> Department of Defense Office of Force Transformation. *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020*.

the 2003 Army Transformation Roadmap, which only states, “Future Force leaders must possess the following traits: multi-functional, comfortable with ambiguity, knowledgeable on information technology and system of system operations, and capable of intuitive assessments of situations for rapid decision-making.”<sup>80</sup> Not only do these traits fail to clearly address Joint Vision traits of forward thinking and multicultural understanding, but the document also fails to identify a strategy for obtaining candidates with these job-spanning KSAOs. Either the need for new personnel competencies is only being paid lip-service, or the need for new competencies within the force remains relevant and only overlooked as a staffing issue. The very nature of the contemporary security environment and the job-spanning needs of a capabilities-based force strongly suggest the latter. This line of thought leads to the central problem with the effectiveness of the current Army staffing system. The Army claims it needs personnel with certain competencies for the future force, but the Army is not currently selecting recruits based on their possession of these competencies. Bertalanffy’s principle of equifinality<sup>81</sup> predicts this oversight will have disastrous consequences.

## **Mechanics Of Misalignment**

Since 1976 all United States armed services have employed the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) as the main selection and job placement test<sup>82</sup> for applicants. The selection process basically consists of the ASVAB to measure cognitive ability, a physical examination to determine physical suitability, and a rudimentary criminal background investigation to assess applicant moral background and integrity.<sup>83</sup> The results of the physical

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<sup>80</sup> U.S. Army, *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 8-2.

<sup>81</sup> Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory*, 40.

<sup>82</sup> Zook, *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*.

<sup>83</sup> Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*.

suitability and integrity tests can be considered as limiting agents or contingency assessments in the overall selection decision, in that the results from these tests tend to produce a pass or fail decisions for service suitability. The real qualifying test, whose aggregate score is used to select and place applicants into occupations, is the cognitive ability test, the ASVAB.<sup>84</sup> Provided a candidate passes the ASVAB and is otherwise qualified for enlistment (i.e. does not fail any contingency assessment), ASVAB aptitude area score composites are compared to each services' job requirements analysis data (KSAOs) to match a candidate to occupations for which he or she is cognitively qualified and for which a training vacancy exists within the applicant's stated period of availability.<sup>85</sup> Thus the selection and placement system is designed to optimize applicant cognitive ability with training costs. If a listed job satisfies applicant expectations or desires, the training vacancy is offered. Normally the candidate subsequently enlists and the selection process terminates.<sup>86</sup>

Basing job selection and placement on cognitive ability testing is not new, and in fact, cognitive ability testing is recognized within the human resource community as enjoying the potential for a relatively high correlation of validity with performance.<sup>87</sup> In moderate support of this empirical data, ASVAB scores have shown a statistically valid correlation with a soldiers' subsequent first tour performance in some areas.<sup>88</sup> But it is important to note the categories of performance that enjoyed the best correlation to ASVAB scores were technical proficiency (.63)

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Campbell and Zook, *Building and Retaining the Career Force: New Procedures for Accessing and Assigning Army Enlisted Personnel—Final Report*; Greenston, "Development of New Army Aptitude Composites for Classification"; Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*; Heffner, "Maximizing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Noncommissioned Officer Performance (NCO21)"; Zook, *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*.

<sup>86</sup> Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*.

<sup>87</sup> Heneman and Judge, *Staffing Organizations*.

<sup>88</sup> Zook, *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*.

and general soldiering proficiency (.65) while examinations of the other three experimental performance categories of effort and leadership, personal discipline, and physical fitness and military bearing did not enjoy such statistically valid correlation (.31, .16, and .20 respectively).<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately the ASVAB does not measure adaptability, innovation, precise judgment, forward thinking, multicultural understanding, or any other job-spanning KSAOs or competencies that are articulated by the Army as necessary, or will arguably be needed by the future force, that same force that is entering service today.<sup>90</sup>

Official research has also shown that of several personnel tests evaluated, the ASVAB proved to be the least effective at predicting enlisted performance in the future environment.<sup>91</sup> Other studies criticize the ASVAB as being incapable of reliable prediction of any future performance due to the way in which composite aptitude area scores are formulated, attributing this tendency to the use of calculative methodology designs from the 1950s, when simplicity was more important than accuracy.<sup>92</sup> Clearly the selection and placement criteria underpinning the staffing strategy for the Army is the same as it was during the Cold War, and may even suffer from the same mathematical simplicity of the 1950s. By relying solely on cognitive ability testing, the Army philosophy seems to perpetuate the assumption that the smartest applicants will be the best soldiers. Should the Army expect the smartest applicants to also be the most innovative, adaptable, or possess the best forward thinking ability? Clearly, the assumptions concerning cognitive ability which underpin the current Army staffing strategy are, at best, incomplete. Additionally, by relying on the Cold War paradigm for soldier selection, the Army neglects to attribute any importance at all to the current global security circumstances or the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Heffner, "Maximizing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Noncommissioned Officer Performance (NCO21)."

<sup>92</sup> Greenston, "Development of New Army Aptitude Composites for Classification.."

Department of Defense's response, namely to transition from a threat-based to a capabilities-based force.<sup>93</sup> The Army, and the other armed services, find themselves operating today within staffing strategies and structures that are outdated and require re-alignment with modern requirements. If the Army continues to fail to incorporate future force competencies into its current selection testing criteria it will husband a force that, in the near term, could resist or be incapable of transitioning to the rigors of a capabilities-based paradigm and over the long term the ramification could be even worse. Because of the closed system nature of the promotion system, these initial inappropriate tendencies will have the propensity to perpetuate resistance or provoke an eventual loss of system integrity and cohesion. Fortunately it may not be too late to intercede with a solution to the Army's staffing strategy misalignment.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is not too late for the Army and Department of Defense to transition from a Cold War selection and placement paradigm to a staffing strategy more aligned with the current course of military transformation and the global security situation. However, they have to understand and appreciate the urgency intrinsic to the current circumstances. This urgency is manifest in the prospect of future force inadequacy with every inappropriate accession, a prospect that is compounded by the closed system nature of the military internal recruitment promotion system. By addressing efficiency flaws identified in the first portion of this paper and re-engineering effectiveness through better aligned strategic force planning that incorporates enhanced qualitative analysis techniques such as competency-based job analysis, the services will identify and quantify enhanced and relevant selection and placement criteria for tomorrow's force. By subsequently re-engineering the technology and processes associated with applicant selection and placement at the MEPS sites, the Army and other armed services can better posture their forces

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<sup>93</sup> Department of Defense Office of Force Transformation. *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*; Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*.

for success on the dynamic, capabilities-based battlegrounds of tomorrow. The Army and Department of Defense cannot afford to continue to measure recruits by Cold War standards but must take advantage of available technology and research to refine the force accessions to ensure the right soldiers are in the proper places. Because human capital will be operating tomorrow's machines of war, the services must ensure each soldier not only possess the cognitive ability, but also desired competencies such as determination, discipline, innovation, and adaptability. To delay this re-engineering effort is analogous to delaying overall transformation itself. A re-engineering proposal follows for consideration.

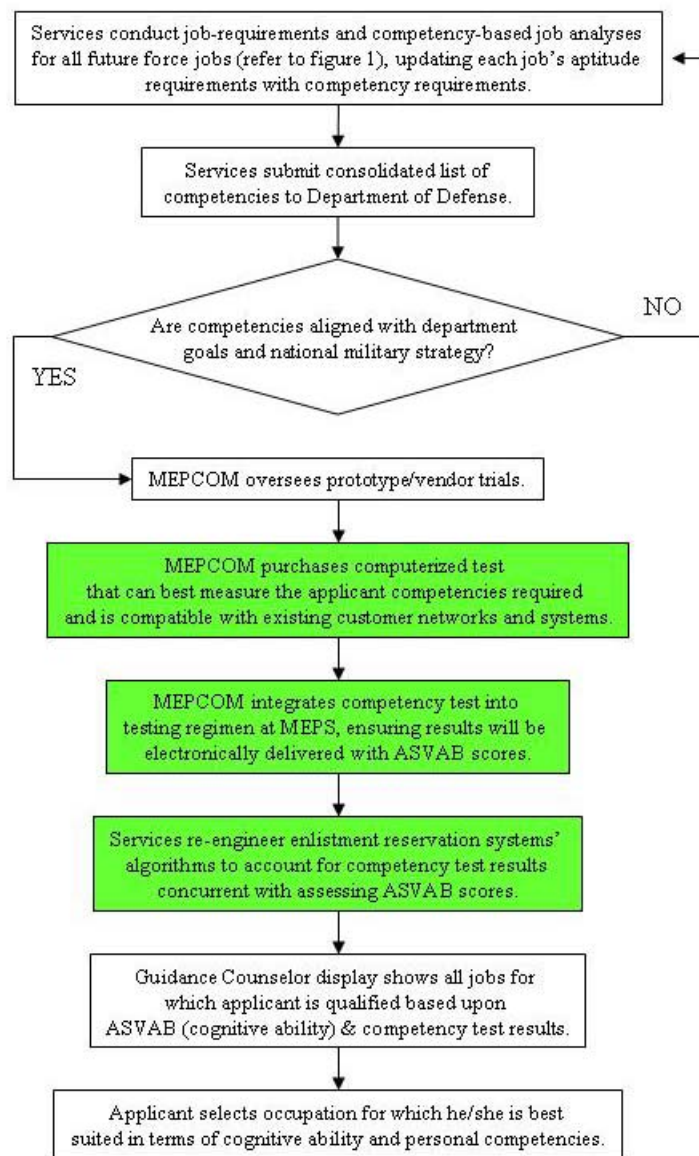
## **Strategy and Technology Re-Engineering**

The solution to the Army's staffing strategy misalignment will require force planners to first adjust the strategy itself and then re-engineer the selection and placement processes. These are the major processes that require immediate re-engineering. This strategic process re-engineering solution is illustrated in [figure 2](#), and as depicted, the fundamental re-engineering involves aligning staffing goals through the integration of competency-based job analysis as part of the organization's strategic qualitative needs assessment.

## **Strategy Re-engineering**

In order to align strategic staffing goals, the Army must acknowledge that while the practice of assigning occupations to soldiers based on cognitive ability alone may have been sufficient in the Cold War under a static, threat-based security paradigm, it may not be sufficient in the new global security context, and certainly runs counter to the tenets of a capabilities-based





(Green-shaded boxes indicates solution steps where investment will be required.)

**Figure 2.**

force. This misalignment between current staffing strategy and the required staffing strategy was discussed in the prior section. In order to correct this issue, the Army, together with the other services, must re-engineer the qualitative analysis processes used to identify occupational

requirements. While it may still be relevant to maintain cognitive ability measures as a selection criteria, it will clearly be much more effective to include competency measures as well.

To establish competency measures, the services must first agree on what competencies will be vital to their organizational mission goals and responsibilities. A research-then-theory model of scientific scrutiny may be best for this task, and the competency-based job analysis is the equivalent to this traditional scientific model. After re-engineering their strategic staff planning process to incorporate a competency-based job analysis, services should compile their competencies and submit them for a comprehensive legal review. This review should endeavor to preclude Congressional inquiry or future litigation of disparate impact based upon any competency measure, by establishing a clear Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) or business necessity as required by the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1991.<sup>94</sup> After competency-based job analysis and legal review of consolidated service competency measures, the strategic process re-engineering portion of this solution will be complete, and the Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) should assume the project lead for the technology process re-engineering.

## **Technology Re-engineering**

The technology re-engineering of the selection and placement processes will involve the integration of a bolt-on computerized competency test that can be administered and scored electronically at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). Jones highlights the advantage of computerized selection and placement tests as being more efficient and maximizing the ability to "... achieve the very best fit between each person's skills and the organization's needs."<sup>95</sup> Hence blending competency criteria into the Army's current selection and placement criteria will be possible with available technology and will clearly further increase the

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<sup>94</sup> Moran, John. *Employment Law*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> Jones, John. *Virtual HR*. (Crisp Publications Inc, 1998), 71.

organizational value of each enlistment. Because it is responsible for running all MEPS sites, administering all applicant selection testing for all services, and providing Department of Defense representation and authorization for all enlistment contracts<sup>96</sup>, MEPCOM is uniquely suited for leading the development and integration of the computerized competency test into the service selection and placement processes. Further validating this designation are the facts that MEPCOM is the current Human Resource Management Systems (HRMS) manager for the computerized selection test data for all services and already interfaces with all recruiting services systems and networks on a daily basis in every MEPS.

In addition to a project manager, the project team should also include the functions of an implementation specialist, and system auditor. These three positions are the functional minimum required for most technology re-engineering projects involving HRMS.<sup>97</sup> The project team could also be supplemented by separate recruiting service information system specialists with more detailed knowledge of service-specific interfaces to mitigate the common hazards attributed to bolt-on integration. In the circumstances of this study's proposed technology re-engineering, common hazards may include compatibility with existing system idiosyncrasies, information networks, and other recruit reservation linkages. In addition to planning and implementing the technology re-engineering portion of this study's solution, the project team should develop the Request for Proposal (RFP), oversee vendor bidding, and evaluate competitor competency tests for suitability and interoperability, with prototyping being the most desired evaluation mechanism.

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<sup>96</sup> Department of the Army. *Army Regulation 601-270: Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)*.

<sup>97</sup> Ceriello, Vincent and Freeman, Christine. *Human Resource Management Systems*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

## Current and Future Selection and Placement Processes.

Clearly, the major processes affected by this technology re-engineering are selection testing and occupational placement. Because of existing systems and networks, the impact of integrating a bolt-on computerized competency test, will be negligible. To better appreciate the expected ease of this integration, one must first understand the basic nature of the affected systems and processes. The current selection and placement process is mapped at [figure 3](#).

The current selection and placement processes are initiated by the applicant's computerized ASVAB testing.<sup>98</sup> At the MEPS, the applicant's ASVAB test is graded electronically and scores are made available to the Army Guidance Counselor over the MEPS local area network.<sup>99</sup> Normally within minutes after testing, an Army Guidance Counselor will know if the applicant passed the ASVAB or not, and what his or her scores were in the ten aptitude area composites used to correlate ASVAB results to Army occupation.<sup>100</sup> This correlation is done by algorithms in the Army's Recruit Quota System (REQUEST) after the Guidance Counselor enters test scores from the MEPS network into REQUEST.<sup>101</sup> These algorithms correlate applicant ASVAB aptitude area scores, with two other factors, namely applicant availability date (i.e., the earliest date the applicant can leave for Basic Training), and available training vacancies.<sup>102</sup> After the applicant passes other contingency assessments, the Guidance Counselor presents a listing of possible occupations, based on the aforementioned

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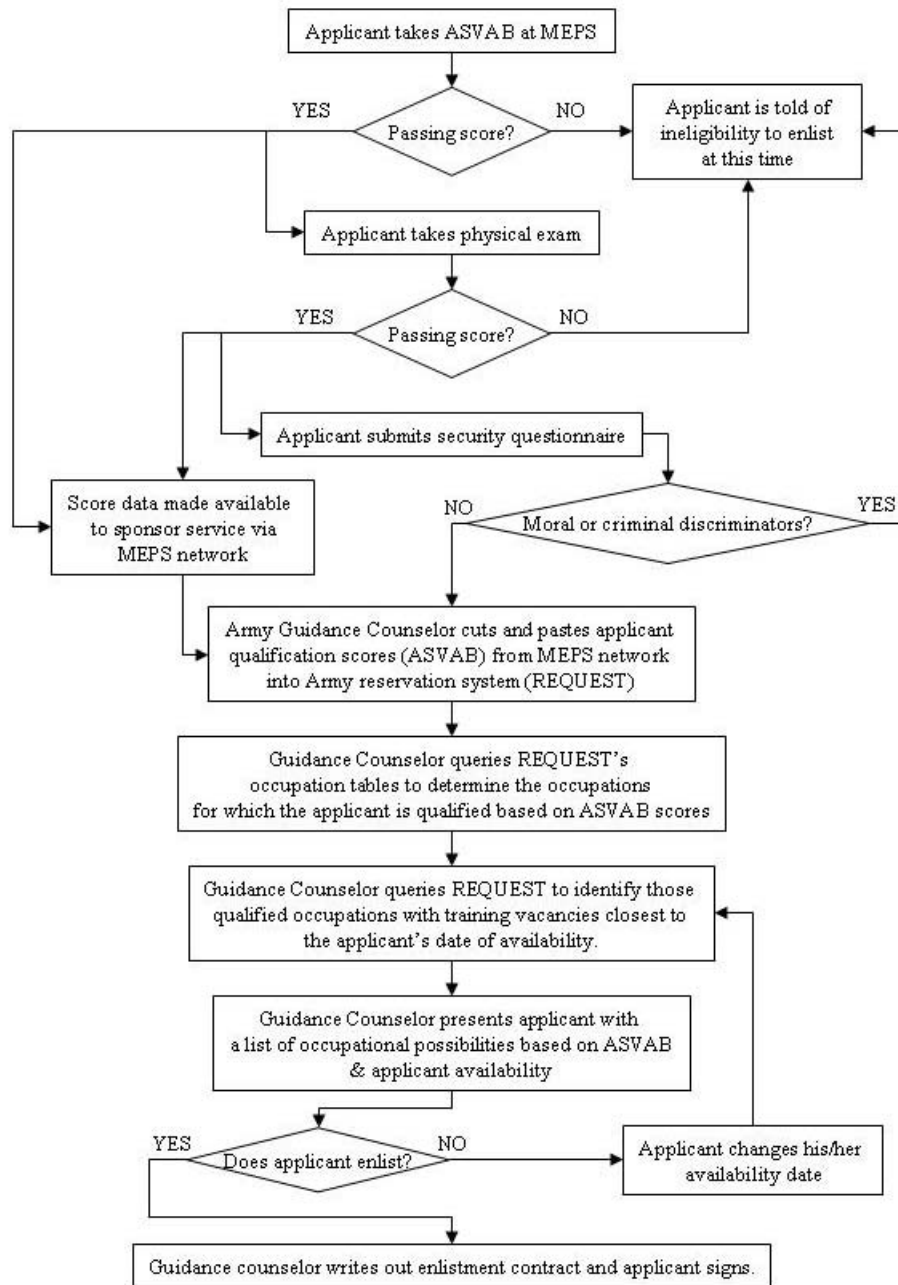
<sup>98</sup> Department of the Army. *Army Regulation 601-270: Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)*.

<sup>99</sup> Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*.

<sup>100</sup> Campbell and Zook, *Building and Retaining the Career Force: New Procedures for Accessing and Assigning Army Enlisted Personnel—Final Report*.

<sup>101</sup> Asch and Karoly, *The Role Of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*; Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command, *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*.

<sup>102</sup> Asch and Karoly, *The Role Of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*.



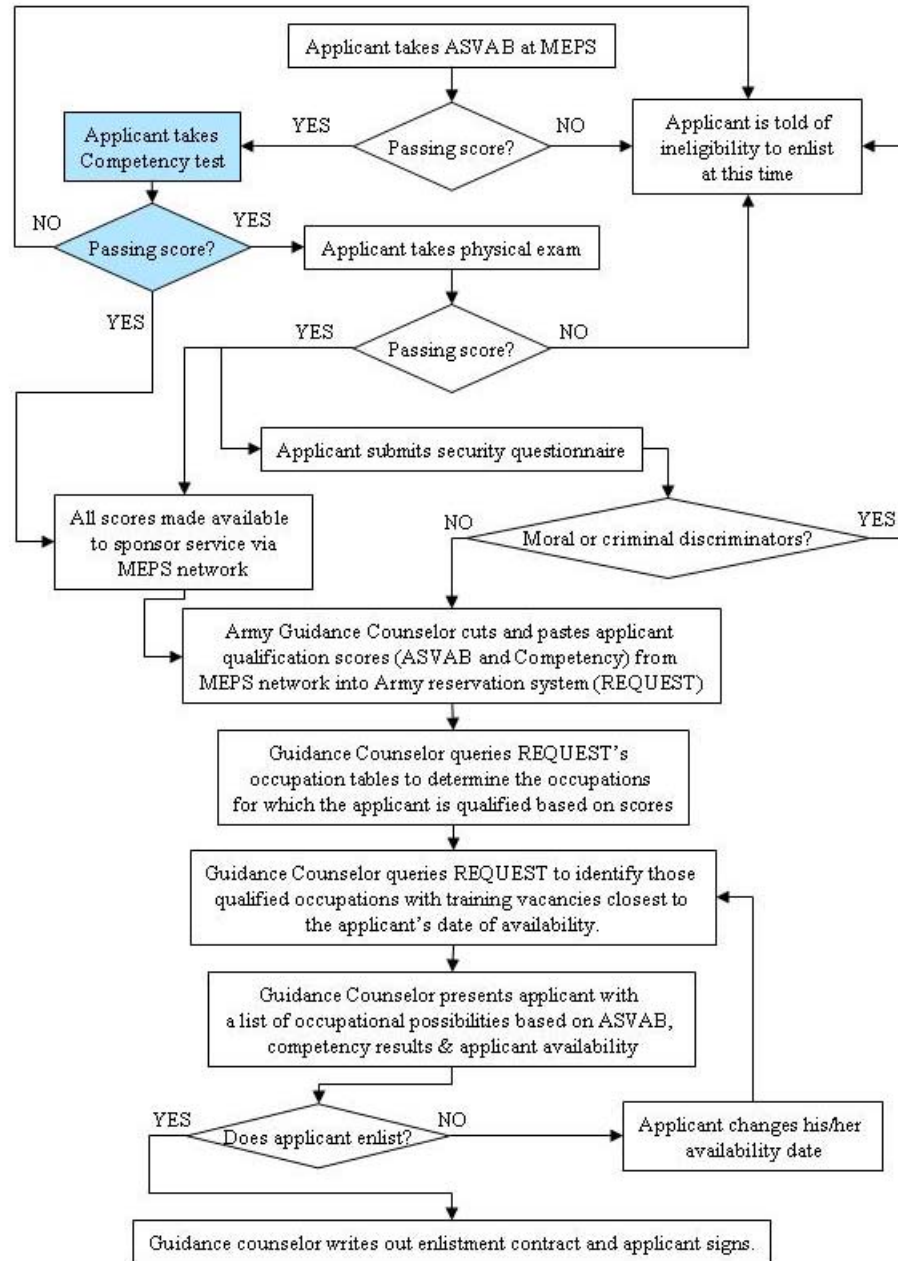
**Figure 3.**

REQUEST algorithmic correlation.<sup>103</sup> From this listing, the applicant chooses an occupation and is thereafter enlisted for that occupation and training vacancy by the Guidance Counselor and MEPS personnel. This understanding of the current process lends credence to the expectation that introduction of any bolt-on testing application, such as the computerized competency test, will have negligible impact on the existing selection and placement system and processes.

Because the ASVAB test is already administered and graded by MEPCOM in a computerized form at the MEPS, the integration of a bolt-on application that mimics ASVAB processes and information pathways should not present too many problems for network engineers. Additionally, the impact on the selection and placement processes themselves should be negligible, provided the Army updates its occupation qualification tables in REQUEST with competency measurements for each occupation, as ascertained during the competency-based job analysis previously conducted by the Army and other services ([figure 2](#)). The expectation of minor systemic impact in both the technological and process domains is visually reinforced by the map of the future selection and placement process found at [figure 4](#). This is not to claim the strategy and technology re-engineering required by this solution will be without challenges at all, but at least significant challenge is not anticipated during the final implementation stages. Instead, the preponderance of challenge should be anticipated in the initial stages of both the strategy and technology re-engineering efforts.

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<sup>103</sup> Asch and Karoly, *The Role Of The Counselor in the Military Enlistment Process*; Campbell and Zook, *Building and Retaining the Career Force: New Procedures for Accessing and Assigning Army Enlisted Personnel—Final Report*; Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting Command Regulation 601-96: Guidance counselor procedures*.



**Figure 4.**

## Strategy Re-engineering Challenges

Expected challenges during the strategy re-engineering as presented by this study concern the inherent difficulty of gaining consensus in large groups. Because the current efficiency of the selection and placement system for all services demands that selection testing and the actual tests

remain common to all services,<sup>104</sup> it may be difficult to find a currently validated test that measures all the competencies that all services resolve upon as necessary in the consolidated listing presented for legal review (see [figure 2](#)). Developing and validating a new test will take time that will be costly in terms of each inappropriate enlistment that either proves capable of only marginal performance or does not complete the initial term of enlistment. At the same time, services should not be encouraged to compromise on including valid competencies for the benefit of joint consensus or a quick fix. Above all, services need to shift their staffing paradigm to enlist the most appropriate applicants for all occupations.

Another challenge within the strategic re-engineering realm will involve legal approval for the competencies to serve as qualifying criteria. For this to happen, each competency must demonstrate a reasonable prerequisite for employment, such as a BFOQ or business necessity, as required by the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1991.<sup>105</sup> This, again, could take time the services cannot really afford to concede, but will be necessary to avoid subsequent litigation under perceptions of disparate impact created by the new computerized competency test. Such delays may be mitigated by employing a private firm to conduct computer-generated job analyses. Many of these firms offer effective, analytical tools with the added benefit of rapid execution.<sup>106</sup>

A final challenge during the strategy re-engineering portion of this proposal will involve convincing senior defense leaders that competency testing is needed, and that time invested in a competency-based job analysis is worthwhile. Some researchers appear to suggest there is an ability to train these competencies,<sup>107</sup> and indeed service training, materiel and doctrine have

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<sup>104</sup> Zook, *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*.

<sup>105</sup> Moran, *Employment Law*.

<sup>106</sup> Jones, *Virtual HR*.

<sup>107</sup> Heffner, "Maximizing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Noncommissioned Officer Performance (NCO21)."



received a lot more emphasis in transformation plans than personnel in general.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, suggestions that competencies such as determination, adaptability, or innovation can actually be trained probably depends more upon how one defines those terms than on any empirical basis. Because these terms and needs are relatively new for the armed services, it is unlikely service-specific definitions have yet had the benefit of empirical experiment, leaving the final executive determination to more personal belief than scientific fact. Fortunately, there are empirical studies that demonstrate the ASVAB alone is not a reliable predictor of effective performance in the future environment.<sup>109</sup> That fact, along with the prevailing executive enthusiasm for a capabilities-based force that by nature requires job-spanning KSAOs, should be enough to at least compel initial, deliberate research into the need for a commensurate paradigm shift in qualitative staffing analysis.

## Technology Re-engineering Challenges

Within the framework of the prescribed technology re-engineering, the prognosis for challenge remains minimal; however there are professional challenges to computerized testing in general that might be exacerbated by the addition of yet another computerized test for federal employment. These challenges concern the testing environment variables and their effects on test results.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the correlation of computer anxiety with negative performance on computerized tests<sup>111</sup> should also be of concern to the project team. This phenomenon should

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<sup>108</sup> Department of the Air Force. *Air Force Transformation Roadmap*; Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020*; *Joint Operations Concept –Final JROC Draft*; Department of Defense Office of Force Transformation. *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*; Department of the Navy. *Naval Transformation Roadmap*; Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*; U.S. Army. *Army Transformation Roadmap*.

<sup>109</sup> Greenston, “Development of New Army Aptitude Composites for Classification.”

<sup>110</sup> Harris, W. G. “Best Practices in Testing Technology: Proposed Computer-Based Testing Guidelines.” *Journal of eCommerce and Psychology*, 1, (2000), 23-35.

<sup>111</sup> O’Connell et al. “Computer Anxiety: Effects on Computerized Testing and Implications for E-Cruiting.” *Journal of eCommerce and Psychology*, 1, (2001), 25-39.

be factored into the RFP in an effort to mitigate provoking such an emotional reaction if possible.

Of the challenges observed and predicted by this study and its recommendations, none appear to be insurmountable. With the right leadership and team attributes, any Human Resource professional should be able to plan and execute the transformation of the Army's selection and placement processes as described by this study.

## **Human Resource Skills Required**

Jones provides a useful insight into the skills required of a Human Resource professional operating within a re-engineering problem set<sup>112</sup>. The Human Resource professional must be capable of bold redesign and creative conceptualization of new processes that add significant value and exponential increases in performance. Jones describes ten common factors of successful re-engineering efforts. The first five can be characterized as automating core processes, rapidly diagnosing the conditions and parameters of the situation, gaining executive support for change, pursuing radical ideas, and framing solutions that do not preserve inefficiencies or ineffective processes. According to Jones, the other five factors of successful re-engineering involve re-engineering without delay, prototyping whenever possible, ensuring satisfaction of the user, maintaining or increasing the popularity of the re-engineered system or process, and seeking and accepting improvements after re-engineering implementation.<sup>113</sup> The project team assembled to execute a facsimile of this study's proposal should bear in mind these ten factors during both planning and execution of the re-engineering effort.

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<sup>112</sup> Jones, Virtual HR.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

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